

device and the method includes updating the database periodically with reference identification particulars from the remote station in a wireless fashion.

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A MONITORING AND IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

THIS INVENTION relates to a monitoring and identification system. In particular, it relates to a system for monitoring and identifying vehicles in a plurality of parking zones and to a device for use in the system. It also relates to a method of monitoring and identifying a vehicle in a parking zone.

WO 98 30982A and EP O 193 320A, respectively disclose so-called parking control units, i.e. portable devices for monitoring or checking whether or not a vehicle is legally parked. The devices are intended for use in parking systems of the kind in which a user is required to enter, inter alia, a vehicle registration number into a remote database in order to register the vehicle as a legally parked vehicle. The devices are able to communicate with the remote database in order to obtain the registration numbers of vehicles which are legally parked. The devices do not function as parking meters.

US 5 745 052 discloses a parking control system for the parking lot of a department store. The system comprises an entry device at the entry of the parking lot, which device issues a parking ticket and an exit device at the exit of the parking lot which is able to read the parking ticket and determine whether a fee is payable. The exit device includes input means, for the input of a vehicle registration number into the device and communication means for communicating with a remote

station where a check is made to identify whether the vehicle has been stolen. US 5 745 052 does not disclose a portable parking meter.

WO 99 10844 discloses a system for debiting, collecting and distribution of parking fees using a cellular or mobile phone. In this system, a mobile telephone is used to register a vehicle as a validly parked vehicle, and a parking check is performed by a roving parking attendant who accesses the database containing the registration numbers of all such registered vehicles. The database is accessed remotely using an internet browser combined with a mobile telephone. WO 99 10844 does not disclose a portable parking meter.

According to the invention, there is provided a device for monitoring and identifying a vehicle in at least one parking zone, the device including

a housing shaped and dimensioned to be hand-held within which is housed:

input means for feeding input identification particulars of a vehicle in a parking zone into the device;

communication means for receiving reference identification particulars of vehicles communicated from a remote station to the device;

storage means for storing said reference identification particulars;

timing means for timing the duration for which the vehicle is parked in the parking zone;

processor means connected to the input means and to the storage means, the processor means including comparator means for comparing the input identification particulars with the reference identification particulars, the processor means being operable to calculate a monetary